her mouth with wisdom, and the law of kindness is on her tongue?[16] To whom was Solomon alluding in this verse? He was alluding only to his father David who dwelt in five worlds and composed a psalm [for each of them]. He abode in his mother's womb, and broke into song, as it says, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all my inwards[17] bless His holy name.[18] He came out into the open air and looked upon the stars and constellations and broke into song, as it says, Bless the Lord, ye angels of His, ye mighty in strength that fulfil His word, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts[19] etc. He sucked from his mother's bosom and looked on her breasts and broke into song, as it says, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.[20] What means 'all His benefits'? — R. Abbahu said: That He placed her breasts at the source of understanding.[21] For what reason is this? — Rab Judah said: So that he should not look upon the place of shame; R. Mattena said: So that he should not suck from a place that is foul. He saw the downfall of the wicked and broke into song, as it says, Let sinners cease out of the earth and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul, Hallelujah.[22] He looked upon the day of death and broke into song, as it says, Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, Thou art very great, Thou art clothed with glory and majesty.[23] How does this verse refer to the day of death? — Rabbah son of R. Shila said: We learn it from the end of the passage, where it is written: Thou hidest Thy face, they vanish, Thou withdrawest their breath, they perish etc.[24]

R. Shimi b. 'Ukba (others say, Mar 'Ukba) was often in the company of R. Simeon b. Pazzi, who[25] used to arrange aggadahs [and recite them] before R. Johanan. He[26] said to him: What is the meaning of the verse, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name?[27] — He replied: Come and observe how the capacity of human beings falls short of the capacity of the Holy One, blessed be He. It is in the capacity of a human being to draw a figure on a wall, but he cannot invest it with breath and spirit, bowels and intestines. But the Holy One, blessed be He, is not so; He shapes one form in the midst of another, and invests it with breath and spirit, bowels and intestines. And that is what Hannah said: There is none holy as the Lord, for there is none beside Thee, neither is there any zur [rock] like our God.[28] What means, neither is there any zur like our God'? There is no artist [zayyar] like our God. What means, 'For there is none beside Thee'? R. Judah b. Menasiah said: Read not, There is none bilteka, but, There is none lebalotheka [to consume Thee]. For the nature of flesh and blood is not like that of the Holy One, blessed be He. It is the nature of flesh and blood to be outlived by its works, but the Holy One, blessed be He, outlives His works. He said to him:[29] What I meant to tell you is this: To whom did David refer in these five verses beginning with 'Bless the Lord, O my soul'? He was alluding only to the Holy One, blessed be He, and to the soul. Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, fills the whole world, so the soul fills the body. Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, sees, but is not seen, so the soul sees but is not itself seen. Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, feeds the whole world, so the soul feeds the whole body. Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, is pure, so the soul is pure. Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, abides in the innermost precincts, so the soul abides in the innermost precincts. Let that which has these five qualities come and praise Him who has these five qualities.

R. Hamnuna said: What is the meaning of the verse, Who is as the wise man? And who knoweth the interpretation [pesher] of a thing?[30] Who is like the Holy One, blessed be He, who knew how to effect a reconciliation [pesharah] between two righteous men, Hezekiah and Isaiah? Hezekiah said: Let Isaiah come to me, for so we find that Elijah went to Ahab,[31] as it says, And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab.[32] Isaiah said: Let Hezekiah come to me, for so we find that Jehoram son of Ahab went to Elisha.[33] What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He brought sufferings upon Hezekiah and then said to Isaiah, Go visit the sick. For so it says, In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, son of Amoz, came to him and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live[34] etc. What is the meaning of 'thou shalt die and not live'? Thou shalt die in this world and not live in the world to come. He said to him: Why so bad? He replied: Because you did not try to have children. He said: The reason was because I saw by the holy spirit that the children issuing from me would not be virtuous. He said to him: What have you to